

neighborhood system. Rather than having each teacher remain in his or her own classroom all day and keeping all records there, each of the two academic levels houses four neighborhoods. Each of these units has a large common office for teachers of various disciplines. All files are kept in this room, and students and parents may come there for conferences in an enclosed meeting room. A break room and kitchen are provided for faculty.

Gabel said this system enables teachers of various subjects to interact. It is also sometimes useful for a teacher of one subject to discuss a student with another instructor.

The school's college center is adjacent to the library. This space is provided for students to research colleges and scholarships. Representatives of colleges come to this area to interact with students. The center is staffed entirely by parent volunteers.

The student population of Palmer Ridge is 1,088. All incoming freshmen receive instruction in study skills and organization.

The school offers concurrent enrollment in advanced placement (AP) classes. In this way, Gabel said, students may receive high school and college credit for the same course material.

The school library is rated as one of nine in the state that is a highly effective school library.

In the 2011-12 school year, the school exceeded the median requirement for adequate growth and is in the 92nd percentile for achievement in math.

Gabel said Palmer Ridge students on Individual Education Plans (IEPs) exceeded goals in reading achievement but did not reach the goals for achievement in math.

Interventions are offered for students in reading through an intermediate English class that offers direct

individual instruction.

Gabel said Palmer Ridge students are given readiness tests to determine the appropriate math class for them. Students are not denied the ability to enroll in a more difficult class, but the readiness test can help them to determine their abilities. In some cases, parents commit themselves to monitoring and helping students so that they may take more rigorous classes.

Students with significant growth gaps can use Pearsonsuccess.net to receive additional instruction in math. Gabel said that it is sometimes challenging to catch up with gaps once a student reaches high school.

Student achievement on the ACT test for 2011-12 tied the district's all-time best, with one student achieving a perfect score. The school is second in the state for ACT scores (The Classical Academy is in first place).

The school offers ACT prep classes to juniors and seniors during the time when underclassmen are taking TCAP tests.

Palmer Ridge offers AP classes in 15 subjects, including languages and fine arts. It received an award for the largest number of students taking the AP exams and succeeding. Teachers of these courses receive training during the summer so that their curriculum meets College Board standards.

The class of 2012 received \$9.3 million in scholarship offers. Also, musicians, vocalists, actors, and athletes from Palmer Ridge distinguished themselves in many ways, Gabel said.

The Student Council has been so successful in its fundraising efforts that it now offers grants to other clubs and activities, Gabel said.

Board of Education liaison report

Board of Education Liaison John Magerko reported that he is acting as the district's liaison with the Colorado Association of School Boards (CASB).

CASB passed a resolution to advocate for connectivity within districts but left implementation of the resolution to individual boards. With connectivity, students from several schools may attend a class remotely.

Magerko said a common concern of CASB is that the state Legislature has passed a number of unfunded mandates over the past 10 years.

Magerko also said that he has been reaching out to other boards in the Colorado Springs area, notably that of Cheyenne Mountain District 12, because it is similar in size to District 38. He has attended a board meeting in District 12.

Responding to a question about budgeting, Magerko said that the board will receive its auditor report in the following week and is reviewing last year's budget.

The board is also continuing to plan for a mill levy override proposal on the 2014 ballot. The board will prepare two budgets for the 2013-14 year, one considering the passage of the ballot issue and one considering its defeat.

Director of Assessment, Gifted Education and Technology Lori Benton said 15 of 16 initiatives for mill levy overrides in the state were successful.

The District Accountability Advisory Committee meets at 7 p.m. on the second Tuesday of each month. Locations vary. The next meeting will be held at Bear Creek Elementary School, 1530 Creekside Drive, Monument, on Dec. 11.

Harriet Halbig can be reached at harriethalbig@ocn.me.

Special Education Advisory Committee, Nov. 14

Superintendent describes district's achievements, challenges

By Harriet Halbig

Lewis-Palmer School District Superintendent John Borman addressed the Special Education Advisory Committee on Nov. 14 to inform them of his background and the status of various programs in the district.

Borman said that he began his career in education as a high school English teacher and has since served in the positions of athletic director, assistant principal, and principal before being selected as superintendent at the beginning of the 2011-12 school year.

Before coming to this area, Borman was a principal at Greeley Central High School and there was first responsible for the school's special education program. The Greeley community has a large community of English Language Learners, and this presented a challenge that many general education teachers felt unable to meet.

He said that he believes that training of general education teachers is essential before they are comfortable accepting those on Individual Education Plans (IEPs) or those with language challenges into the general classroom.

Borman said he is proud of the public education school system because it is willing to accept all students and offer them what they need to reach their potential.

District's distinctions

The Lewis-Palmer School District was accredited with distinction for the 2011-12 school year, the second year in a row. To achieve this honor, a district must achieve in the top 10 percent of the state. This was achieved despite over \$10 million in cuts over the past four years.

In addition, the district is on the College Board's Advanced Placement Honor Roll for the third year in a row, the only district in the state to have this distinction.

The district's performance framework is dictated by the Colorado Department of Education. The framework assesses achievement, growth, academic growth gaps, and postsecondary education and workforce readiness.

Growth gaps are broken down into groups of 15 or

more students, and disabled students compose a large portion of those in this area. This enables the district to analyze challenges among students and to provide extra help as necessary.

Borman explained the source of many of the budget challenges of the past few years. In the 1980s the Gallagher Amendment put a cap on property tax rates, which compose 60 percent of school funding, and as a result the state had to provide a larger share of school funding. The Taxpayers Bill of Rights in the 1990s then limited the state's contribution. This year, district employees were granted a raise for the first time in five years.

As a consequence of shrinking funding, class sizes grew and interventions such as reading and math coaches were cut.

Borman said that it is critical for the district to inform community members about such changes in the system's ability to meet the needs of disabled students and the contribution that a successful mill levy override could make to the district.

When asked about inclusiveness of IEP students in the general education classroom, Borman said that general education teachers are often not sufficiently trained to be confident with this option. He said the skills needed to make them confident are skills needed by all good teachers, however. One aspect of the district that has suffered from the significant cuts is professional development. The district no longer has a full-time professional development director.

There was a brief discussion of the COALT, the Colorado Alternative Test for those who are unable to take the TCAP exam. It was explained that parents can obtain information about this test and what sorts of accommoda-

tions (such as extra time) can be made for students with disabilities. Standards for the test can be found on the Colorado Department of Education website.

Special Education Parent Liaison Michelle Nay offered information about an upcoming conference about inclusion. The conference will be held on Feb. 7-8, 2013, in Denver, and early registration must be received by Dec. 4. For further information, go to conference@peakparent.org.

The Special Education Advisory Committee meets at 6:30 p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month in the district's Learning Center, 146 Jefferson St., Monument. The next meeting will be held on Dec. 12.

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